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February 8, 2006

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bruce A. Chernof, M.D.
Acting Director and Chief Medical Officer

Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director of Public Health and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON CULTURAL FOOD PREPARATION LAWS**

On October 18, 2005, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion by Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich directing the Director of Public Health to convene meetings with restaurant groups representing various Asian cuisines and report back in 30 days. This is to provide an update on our progress since our January 4, 2006 status report.

Determine additional training needs on the recent State law changes concerning food temperature

Status – The Environmental Health, Consultation & Technical Services (CTS) unit received several completed needs assessment surveys from members of both the Chinese and Korean restaurant communities. CTS reviewed all completed surveys received to this date and gathered preliminary results.

Survey responses from members of the Chinese restaurant community indicate that there is a need for reference materials (e.g., basic food handler requirements, and certified food handler requirements) to be translated into Chinese and made readily available to Chinese-speaking restaurateurs. Chinese restaurateurs also expressed concerns regarding compliance with hot food holding temperature requirements for bar-be-qued pork and Chinese roast pig as it is suggested that such requirements may compromise the aesthetic quality of the food items. With regard to training workshop topics that would be of interest to Chinese restaurateurs, the majority of

respondents indicated they would be interested in a workshop that addressed basic food safety principles.

Survey responses from members of the Korean restaurant community also revealed a need for reference materials to be translated into Korean. However in contrast to Chinese restaurateurs, the majority of Korean restaurateurs identified Department policies as the reference material they would most like to have translated into their language. Korean restaurateurs did not appear to have much difficulty in complying with temperature holding requirements; 56 percent of Korean respondents indicated that they “never” had difficulty maintaining foods within the temperature requirements and an additional 36 percent indicated that they had difficulty only “sometimes”. A few respondents did express concerns with temperature holding requirements as they relate to fermented Korean cuisines such as Kim-chee and various bean pastes. Lastly, the majority of Korean respondents indicated that they would be interested in a workshop that addressed basic food safety principles.

With respect to survey responses received from both the Chinese and Korean restaurant communities, the CTS unit will begin formulating a program to address the needs and concerns.

Organizations/associations representing the Japanese restaurant community have requested additional time to gather comments on the survey instrument as well as additional time to collect completed survey instruments to submit to the CTS unit. CTS will continue to solicit input from the Japanese restaurant community as well as continue to identify potential Thai, Vietnamese, and Filipino organizations/associations that are representative of the respective restaurant communities.

Additional studies on the safety of traditional cultural food preparation techniques

Status – A literature review of food items that survey respondents have identified as areas of concern with respect to food holding temperature requirements will be initiated by the CTS unit. Pending the results of this review, laboratory analysis of the food items may be necessary to determine whether or not the foods pose a threat to public health and safety when stored at temperatures other than those identified in current law.

We will provide another status report in 30 days. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information, please let either of us know.

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c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors